

Exhibit 7

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Doctors in NYC Hospitals, Jails, and Shelters Call on the City to Take More Aggressive Action to Combat the Spread of Coronavirus



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From NYC Council Members Brad Lander and Ritchie Torres:



As public representatives, we have been talking with constituents, public health experts, schools, and city officials about how to balance the urgent need to slow the spread of coronavirus with the need to continue providing services, maintain public order, and lessen the hardships on families and vulnerable populations. In that spirit, we are sharing the following letter, provided to us by a group of doctors working in the City's hospitals, jails, clinics and shelters, which calls for the City to rapidly take far more aggressive steps (as they term it: "enforced solidarity") to halt community spread.

March 12, 2020

An Open Letter to Mayor de Blasio and City Officials

As doctors and public health officials working in the City's hospitals, jails, clinics, and shelters, we are extremely anxious about the impact of the COVID-19 virus on vulnerable populations and by the City's hesitance to take more dramatic action. Given the information we have about the exponential growth of the virus and the limited capacity of our health system to care for the number of people who will become sick and need care at the same time, we believe that aggressive measures must be taken now. Actions taken now to encourage and facilitate what we are calling enforced solidarity (a more accurate description than social distancing) will mitigate the impact of the virus on vulnerable populations and our health system.

We call on the City to:

Act immediately and boldly to slow the spread of the virus:

- Suspend classes at public schools, while keeping schools open for emergency childcare for essential workers and vulnerable families. Keep childcare groups small, under 10 kids per group. Close schools immediately and reopen some as centers of family support and mitigation.
- Order the NYPD to stop making low level arrests for violations and misdemeanors, in order to prevent the spread of the virus through our jails, courts, and precincts.

- Order the courts to consider release for anyone in pretrial detention over 60. Administratively reschedule all criminal court proceedings for people who are not currently incarcerated. Reschedule all other court proceedings.
- Urge businesses to have all non-essential workers work from home. Employers may have discretion over who is “essential,” but give guidance that only those providing services that must be maintained during a state of emergency should be considered essential.
- Strongly advise people over 60 to avoid public transit.
- Cancel all City events and revoke permits for events.
- Ensure that medical personnel have adequate personal protective equipment.
- Open a virus hotline for residents to be able to call a nurse and get a home visit if needed for quarantined people with moderate symptoms rather than bring people into the ER.
- Order the Administration of Children’s Services (ACS) to stop requiring parents to attend groups and programs; halt non-emergency family court proceedings, guarantee tele-visitation for parents and children.

Take steps to strengthen the social safety net to protect vulnerable New Yorkers.

- Turn schools into centers for community aid: food pantry, crisis navigation, and eventually satellite testing sites once we have capacity to test widely.
- Urge the State to adopt paid sick leave for up to 2 weeks for all workers immediately.
- Work with the State to institute an immediate moratorium on evictions and provide benefits for families and businesses.
- Divert workers from other non-essential services to Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and public housing to check on quarantined elderly. Can do by phone/remote to minimize unnecessary contact.
- Increase Meals-on-Wheels service.

- Increase staffing for the City’s mental health hotline to deal with increased anxiety and suicidality exacerbated by isolation and uncertainty.
- Take steps to address the digital divide, including providing burner cell phones at crisis centers and shelters for people who do not have cell phones.

We are grateful for the City’s caution and attention to the impact of the coronavirus and associated response on vulnerable populations. We urge the City to begin taking more aggressive steps to shut down business as usual to slow community spread, while also increasing support for vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

Doctors and public health officials working in NYC’s hospitals, jails, clinics, and shelters

Healthcare Jail Shelter Doctors

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